

F.A.Q.'s About Group Home Requirements

Q: How is my Group Home classified by the Fire Marshal's Office? In other words, what determines what category I fall into?

A: The 2000 International Building Code, (IBC), defines Residential Care/Assisted Living facilities as such:

*"A building or part thereof housing a maximum of 16 persons on a 24 hour basis, who because of age, mental disability, or other reasons, live in a supervised residential environment which provides personal care services. **The occupants are capable of responding to an emergency without physical assistance from staff.** This classification shall include... social rehabilitation facilities, group homes, halfway houses, drug/alcohol abuse centers.... Residential Care facilities housing 6 to 16 persons are Group R-4 occupancies. Residential care facilities housing more than 16 persons shall be classified as Group I-1. A facility with five or fewer persons is classified as R-3.*

Q: When is a sprinkler system required in my facility?

A: The 2000 IBC, section 903.2.9, states that all R-4 occupancies with more than 8 occupants require an automatic sprinkler system. However, the State of Utah has amended that section and rewritten it as follows: *"Exception: Buildings not more than 4500 gross square feet and not containing more than 16 occupants, and containing an approved fire alarm system....shall not require a sprinkler system."* (R710-3.11.2) An I-1 facility requires a sprinkler system without exception. (IBC 903.2.5)

Q: When is a fire alarm system required in my facility?

A: If you fall into the definition of an R-3 or R-4 facility, you must have interconnected smoke detectors in the following locations:

- On the ceiling or wall outside of each sleeping room
- In each sleeping room
- On each story of a building, including cellars and basements.

An I-1 facility requires a *manual fire alarm system* and *automatic fire detection system*. This means you will have a fire alarm panel, audible/visual notification devices, manual pull stations, and smoke and heat detectors, all of which are installed and serviced by a qualified, licensed contractor. (IFC 907.2.10.1.2 & 907.2.6)

Q: Am I required to conduct fire drills?

A: Yes. Fire drills must be conducted in I-1 and R-4 facilities on a quarterly basis, on each shift. Drills include the complete evacuation of the facility. Written records shall be kept, which include the following:

- Name of person supervising drill
- Date and time of drill
- Elapsed time to complete evacuation of building
- Problems encountered, if any.

R-3 facilities are not required to conduct fire drills. (IFC 405.2 & 405.5)

Q: What kind of building, (existing or new), can I put my group home in?

A: The construction type, size, and height of the building determine what occupancies it can contain. Please call your local fire department or fire marshal to find out if the building in question qualifies. The majority of all buildings can be made to qualify.

Q: Do my employees require fire safety training? What kind and how often?

A: Yes. Employees in I-1 and R-4 occupancies must be trained in evacuation routes and procedures, fire alarm signals and operation, and general fire prevention. Employees shall be trained in the use of fire extinguishers, where present. Employees shall receive training as part of new employee orientation and at least annually thereafter. Written training records shall be kept on file. (IFC 406.1)

Q: When can I move residents into my new group home?

A: Only after passing a complete building and systems inspection by the State Fire Marshal's Office and local Fire Chief. Remodels, additions, and changes in occupancy also require an inspection. Please note: passing your fire inspection does not mean you have met health department or other related requirements; please contact those agencies for their regulations.

Q: Can I 'lock' residents into my facility, via locked windows and doors?

A: Not as an R-3, R-4 or I-1. A true 'lockdown' facility is classified as an I-3, (jail, prison, reformatory), and has strict requirements on construction type, size, height, sprinkler system, and fire alarm requirements. You may not restrict the freedom of egress of your residents unless you comply with all I-3 requirements. You can place audible alarms on doors and windows to *alert* you of resident movement, but you cannot lock them in buildings. (IBC 308.4)

Q: I have more questions. Who do I contact?

A: Call your local Fire Chief, or contact the State Fire Marshal's Office. If you are in Washington, Iron, Kane, Garfield, Beaver, Piute, Sevier, Millard or Wayne counties, call the State Fire Marshal's Southern Regional Office at 435-867-5156.

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